

Approving Official QUICK GUIDE



This image depicts the GSA SmartPay 2 credit card with security chip.

You Need to Know

This quick guide assists Approving Officials (AOs) in carrying out their authority and responsibilities in managing the purchase card and is to be used in conjunction with [Departmental Regulation \(DR\) 5013-6](#) and the [Approving Officials Purchase Card Program Guide](#). The DR, Guide, and all other documents referenced in this quick guide are available at the [CCSC Web site](#).

Transaction Approval Policy

AOs are responsible for ensuring that cardholders approve purchase card transactions within 30 days after appearing in Access® Online. AOs must final approve transactions within 30 days after transactions appear in their "Manager Approval Queue" in Access Online.

Final Approval Process

Access Online allows AOs to set up email notifications when transactions are available for them to final approve. Final approval involves reviewing the transaction to ensure the purchase was for official government purposes and goods/services were received. AOs should review the physical documentation provided by the cardholder on a monthly basis before approving the transaction.

Billing Cycle	Final Approve/ Review by
1/8-2/7	2/7
2/8-3/7	3/7
3/8-4/7	4/7
4/8-5/7	5/7
5/8-6/7	6/7
6/8-7/7	7/7
7/8-8/7	8/7
8/8-9/7	9/7
9/8-10/7	10/7
10/8-11/7	11/7
11/8-12/7	12/7
12/8-1/7	1/7

This table lists the Billing Cycle dates and the Final Review and Approval dates for Approving Officials to follow

Suspension of Cards

Cardholder accounts are suspended when a transaction is not approved by the cardholder and/or not final approved by the AO. Additionally, cards will be suspended for splitting purchase transactions, incomplete item descriptions, and other infractions of purchase card policy.

AO Program Oversight

OMB Circular A-123 states AOs are responsible and accountable for purchases made by cardholders in their offices. AOs are also responsible for exercising appropriate oversight to ensure cardholders do not exceed or abuse their delegated authorities. A physical review of cardholder transactions is performed by AOs during the final approval process. AOs will utilize a checklist as a guide in reviewing transactions. A report of transactions that were final approved by the AO is available within Access Online. The Final Approval Report shall be used to document that the transactions have been reviewed and final approved by the AOs in accordance with DR 5013-6 and OMB Circular A-123, Appendix B. (See Final Approval Process section.)

Nominating Cardholders

Micro-purchase authority may be delegated to government employees in accordance with DR 5013-6. AOs are to use the [Cardholder Request for Purchase Card Form](#) in the [AO Purchase Card Program Guide](#).

Increasing Purchase Limits

AOs submit requests for increases to a cardholder's single or monthly purchase limit to the cardholder's Local Agency Program Coordinator (LAPC) via e-mail. Include the cardholder's name and recommended limit increase.

AO Responsibilities

- Determines the necessity and appropriateness of each card.
- Determines single and monthly purchase limits.
- Submits the prospective cardholder's name, work address (including all acronyms), telephone number, e-mail address, single purchase limit, monthly cardholder limit, accounting information, and check writing capability to the LAPC. Also include the direct Supervisor's name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.
- Ensures that cards issued under their authority are properly utilized for Official Government Business Only.
- Takes disciplinary action or other appropriate action for misuse of purchase cards when notified by the LAPC and notifies the LAPC of action taken.
- Notifies LAPC when cardholder is absent from office due to extenuating circumstances.
- Collects card, checks and destruction form from cardholders. Informs APCs about cardholder departure or reassignment.
- Reviews cardholder transaction reports on a monthly basis and maintains the reports per instructions in DR 5013-6.
- Notifies the LAPC of questionable transactions or possible misuse of the purchase card/ convenience checks.
- Completes required AO Purchase Card Training.
- Completes annual Refresher Training.
- Ensures nominated cardholder completes initial, required Purchase Card training.

Authorized Use of the Card

Use the purchase card first; checks are only to be used if the vendor does not accept the card or in other limited instances in accordance with DR 5013-6:

- In purchasing supplies and services, use required sources first (e.g., AbilityOne Program)
- Incorporate Green Purchasing and Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative (FSSI) solutions
- Rental storage space may be acquired on a short and long term basis with the use of the USDA purchase card
- Use the purchase card to pay for meeting and conference rooms and parking for government-owned or leased vehicles.
- Business cards, if authorized by your agency, can be ordered; refer to the AbilityOne Program
- For warranted contracting personnel, use the card to place orders within their delegated authority.

Unauthorized Use of the Card and Checks

- Cash advances and/or travel advances

- Long-term (more than 180 days) rental or lease of land or buildings except by warranted real property leasing or contracting officers.
- Purchase of hazardous items such as firearms, ammunition, explosives, or hazardous biological and radioactive substances, unless by purchasing agent.
- Purchase of airline, bus, train, or other travel-related tickets and purchase of meals, lodging, or subsistence costs.
- Use for personal purchases or identification. Items purchased with the card are for official government use only. Additionally, the card must not be used for identification for personal purchases (e.g., while paying for a personal purchase by check), or security for personal purchases.
- Purchase of telecommunications resources, except for emergency purchases of telecommunications resources and for purchases of telecommunications products and non-transmission services not exceeding \$350.00.
- Split Transactions (splitting requirements into several purchases merely to avoid the cardholder's delegated single purchase limit).
- Fuel and related supplies and services for government-owned and leased vehicles, aircraft, and other motorized equipment, unless authorized by USDA Departmental Program Manager and USDA Departmental Fleet Program Manager.
- Personal services unless authorized by statute. Personal services are those where an employer-employee relationship occurs such as when there is continuous supervision of the contractor's employees by the government.
- Advance payment to a merchant prior to receipt of goods/services, unless authorized by law (i.e., subscriptions, registration fees, and training).
- Acquisition from commercial sources of products or services available from a required source in time to meet the agency need.
- Other unauthorized purchases include, but are not limited to:
 - Greeting cards
 - Memberships in an individual's (as opposed to an organization's) name
 - Parking tickets against a government vehicle
 - Insurance of items being shipped to or for the government (the Government is self-insuring)
 - Shipment of household goods
 - Meals for federal employees at office or agency functions, unless authorized by law (purchasing food for government employees for a bona fide awards ceremony is permitted by law)

Debt Collection Improvement Act (DCIA) Waivers

DCIA waivers require the government to maximize electronic transactions. Convenience checks are not considered electronic fund transfers (EFT), and are not DCIA compliant unless one of the listed criteria in the [DCIA Waivers for Check Writing Purposes](#) document is met.

Authorized Use of the Convenience Check

Convenience checks are utilized for purchases under \$2,500 when at least one of the DCIA waivers is satisfied and for the following situations:

- Vendor or merchant will not accept the purchase card
- Bona fide emergencies where the purchase card is not a viable solution
- Transactions with small and/or rural businesses that are not yet able to accept the purchase card
- Other properly approved transactions for which the imprest funds were previously used which cannot be addressed using the purchase card
- Emergency payments under \$500 to employees on a documented and approved basis

Unauthorized Use of the Checks

The convenience checks must not be used for:

- Purchases in excess of \$2,500 (except in a bona fide emergency and must have prior approval)
- Payments when the vendor accepts the purchase card
- Indemnity payments
- Vehicle maintenance and repairs
- Utility payments
- Official travel
- Local travel

- Writing checks to one's self or for cash

Card Misuse/Fraud

Procurement laws, regulations, and procedures place upon the cardholder direct responsibility for the proper and lawful execution of procurement actions. Any act exceeding the cardholder's authority is no longer an act of the government but becomes a personal responsibility. Misuse of the purchase card will require the purchase card to be withdrawn from the cardholder. Disciplinary actions may be taken against the cardholder. The cardholder may be liable for payment of the purchase. **This may include financial liability and consideration of disciplinary action up to and including removal from position and possible criminal prosecution.**



This image depicts
the USDA Logo

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